



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 9 May 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
9 MAY 1968

1. North Vietnam

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2. France

Officials are preparing to prevent student rioters from disrupting the Vietnam talks in Paris. Steel barriers and cordons of police are now guarding the US Embassy and the building where the talks are to take place.

There is some reason for the government's concern. One of the more prominent "New Left" student leaders has publicly implied that the rioters may try anti-US demonstrations after the talks begin.

3. Soviet Union

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Recent satellite photographs show that progress is on schedule at the antiballistic missile sites around Moscow. Although the Soviets had originally begun to build twelve such sites, they have now cut back to eight. Pictures of three of these show that they are probably undergoing final check-outs.

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4. East Europe

Party bosses from four East European countries suddenly converged on Moscow yesterday. Rumania and--more significantly--Czechoslovakia were excluded. This looks very much like an urgent conclave over what to do about Czechoslovakia.

Moscow's patience has been wearing thin these past two days over the growing liberal and nationalist trends in Czechoslovakia. The men in the Kremlin have been especially shocked and angered by recent stories in the Czechoslovak press which flatly accuse Soviet agents of involvement in the Prague purges of the 1950s--and in the 1948 death of Jan Masaryk.

Soviet sensitivity to these charges prompted an angry rebuttal in Pravda yesterday. Moscow clearly does not accept at face value Dubcek's assurances that he can control the pace and scope of democratization in the country.

So far, the Czechoslovaks have faced up to Soviet pressures. We know , however, that the leaders in Prague were worried late last month that the Soviets may feel obliged to intervene more forcibly in Czechoslovakia. Yesterday's news of the gathering in Moscow will surely heighten these fears.

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5. Israel - Arab States

Arab terrorists have been striking at Israel with increasing frequency in recent days. Several Israeli soldiers have been killed. This may well prompt Israeli retaliatory action. Jordan, as usual, is the most likely victim.

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6. Panama

Arnulfo Arias feels his only hope in Sunday's election is to amass such a tremendous majority that the government will be unable to cheat him of victory. It is a slim hope. The National Guard is going all out to beat Arias.

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7. British Honduras

The two-year US effort to mediate the old dispute over Guatemalan claims to this Godforsaken colony seems likely to come to naught. The mediator proposes that the colony become an independent state committed to cooperation with Guatemala in foreign, defense, and economic affairs. The natives are rioting because of the proposed limitations on their sovereignty. The Guatemalans are angry because they want fuller control.

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8. Kenya

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

Hanoi's Delegation: Hanoi Radio's international service in English on 8 May broadcast the composition of its delegation to the Paris talks. It also stated that "official" talks would start on 10 May. The delegation is identical to that already reported in Western press releases. It is headed by Minister Xuan Thuy, the "representative of the DRV government," who left Hanoi for Paris on 7 May. Colonel Ha Van Lau, with the rank of ambassador, will serve as an "adviser" to Thuy, as will the three lesser ranking members of the delegation.

A brief biography of Xuan Thuy, also broadcast on the international service in English on 8 May, is apparently designed to underscore his high government and party positions. The broadcast noted that he is both a member of the party secretariat and a government minister--positions he was given after the North Vietnamese response to President Johnson's 31 March statement.

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Soviet View on Peace Talks: A deputy to Soviet UN Ambassador Malik told a senior US official at the UN on 6 May that he thought the Vietnam peace talks would follow the Korean pattern and speculated that two years would be needed to reach a settlement. This is the first Soviet estimate of any kind that we have seen. The Soviet diplomat also commented that Soviet announcement of ratification of the consular convention was directly related to the agreement on opening of the Paris talks.

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Coolness Between Peking and Hanoi: Communist China apparently made strenuous efforts to dissuade North Vietnam from peace talks and is now upset with Hanoi.

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Hanoi Broadcasts Prisoner Statements: Two Hanoi broadcasts of 8 May, one in English to Havana and the other in Vietnamese to South Vietnam, reported statements by two US servicemen who were captured by the Viet Cong earlier this year. As in other such broadcasts, the prisoners were quoted as praising the "humanitarian and lenient" policies of the Communists and appealing for an end to the fighting and US involvement in Vietnam.

More Propaganda on US Bombing: In its latest effort to muster support for its demand for a total cessation of US bombing, Hanoi has sent a letter to the International Red Cross and allied societies alleging that the US has "savagely intensified" its bombings in southern North Vietnam since 31 March. The letter, broadcast over Hanoi's international service in English on 8 May, listed numerous "inhumane acts" committed by the US in the past several weeks. It appealed to the international organizations to demand that the US "match the good will of the DRV government" and cease unconditionally the bombing and all other acts of war against North Vietnam.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR.

There is nothing of significance to report.

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